

County budget increases to \$27.6M

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Skyrocketing costs for employee benefits are cited as the main reason for an increase in the proposed \$27.6 million Sullivan County budget, according to Sullivan County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio.



"It's the benefit package that's hurting us," Gil de Rubio said. "It's like this nationwide in the public sector."

The proposed budget for fiscal 2008 is an increase of about \$1.6 million, or 6 percent, over the current year's budget.

According to Gil de Rubio, a majority of the increase is attributable to benefits such as health insurance, worker compensation, retirement and unemployment insurance.

"Over the years, taxes have been going down," Gil de Rubio said. "But this year we were hit hard."

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Health insurance costs have risen 18 percent over the past year and unemployment compensation has jumped 46 percent during the same period, Gil de Rubio said. Retirement costs also rose 35 percent and worker's compensation increased an additional 25 percent.

To help keep the increases under control, Gil de Rubio is working to change the way county employees are insured.

"We're implementing a new health care package," Gil de Rubio said. "It will definitely help cut costs."

Employees will have the choice of either keeping

the current health benefit package or going with the proposed changes.

"We're not forcing anyone to change, but the new package is a cost savings for both the employee and the county," Gil de Rubio said.

Residents will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed 125-page budget during a public hearing at 7 p.m., Tuesday, June 12, at the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center in Claremont.

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